Integration Director

Focusing on Intelligence Outputs for Better Decision Making

James R. Clapper Jr.
Director of National Intelligence

James R. Clapper Jr. was sworn in as the fourth director of national intelligence (DNI) on August 9, 2010. As DNI, he oversees the U.S. intelligence community and serves as the principal intelligence adviser to the president.

Clapper retired in 1995 after lengthy service in the armed forces, which began as a rifleman in the Marine Corps Reserve and culminated as a lieutenant general in the Air Force and director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Directly following his retirement, Clapper worked in industry for six years as an executive in three successive companies with his business focus being the intelligence community.

Clapper returned to the government in September 2001 as the first civilian director of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA). He served as director for five years, transforming it into the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency as it is today. Prior to becoming DNI, Clapper worked for more than three years in two administrations as the under secretary of defense for intelligence.

Clapper earned a bachelor's degree in government and politics from the University of Maryland, a master's degree in political science from St. Mary's University, San Antonio, and an honorary doctorate in strategic intelligence from the then Joint Military Intelligence College.

Clapper was interviewed by GIF *Editor Harrison Donnelly.*
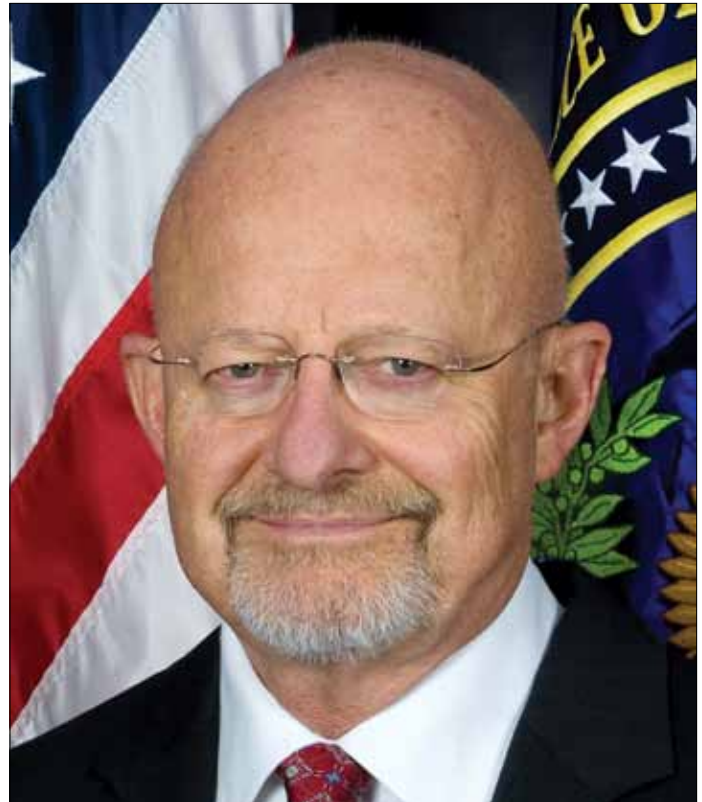
Q: How would you describe your vision of a fully integrated intelligence community?

A: What we're trying to do here is establish an institutional manifestation of a truism in intelligence, that the sum is usually greater than the parts, by integration. I've especially focused on it here, since at this level, the apex of intelligence, you should be focusing on outputs. We have the functional managers, or stovepipes, which are important on a single discipline basis. But there needs to be a focus on integration across those stovepipes, how the silos work together, and how you can bring to bear the complementary attributes of each of the disciplines—GEOINT, SIGINT, HUMINT and so on. So what I'm trying to focus on here is outputs, from the juggernaut machine we have out there called the intelligence community, and how do we make adjustments, see gaps, move emphasis and resources, and change priorities—and how to manage that on something other than an anecdotal, episodic, one-off basis, which has been our history. I'm trying to make that coherent and relevant to inform and influence programmatic decisions. It stems from the fundamental fact that each of our disciplines has unique characteristics and attributes, and when you put them together, it's all the stronger. For a user, consumer and decision maker, whether in the White House or a foxhole, the richer the intelligence output, in terms of the variety of sources it comes from, the better.

Q: How will the integration you seek make the nation more secure?

A: You're giving decision makers and policy makers a better product. The whole objective of intelligence, in its most basic form, is to reduce uncertainty. If you can completely eliminate it, that's great, but most times we don't do that. So what you try to do is to reduce the amount of uncertainty for a decision maker, in the White House, the foxhole, the cockpit or the bridge of a ship. Presumably, if you give those decision makers more insight, they will be more effective, do the right thing and save lives.

Q: What are the main elements of your strategy for achieving intelligence integration?

A: Classically in agencies, collection and analysis and production are separate endeavors. That's true in all of them, and it's appropriate. Here, I've tried to meld them into one organization, to look across the whole spectrum. We've established a series of national intelligence managers [NIMs], whose focus is on either a regional or a transnational, global problem set. They may focus on Southwest Asia or terrorism, for example. We have 17 of those, all of whom are IC seniors who are experts in their area. They have small teams, which are responsible for the alpha to omega of their particular target domain—whether it's analysis, collection or the enterprise. They know our capabilities, shortfalls, needs and gaps, and can report to me through Deputy Director for Intelligence Integration Robert Cardillo on the state of health of any of them. Each manager is charged to generate what we call a 'unifying intelligence strategy,' which lays that out in writing. We've set up some management

boards, including the Intelligence Management Board, which I chair. It brings together the 17 NIMs, who are responsible for outputs, and the functional managers in the form of the agency director, deputy director or some senior official for each agency, who are responsible for inputs. We get them together in the same room and have 'compacts,' if you will, addressing each of those domains.

Q: What lessons have you drawn about intelligence integration from the successful U.S. action against Osama bin Laden?

A: There weren't any new lessons. Obviously, it was a very dramatic example of intelligence integration. It was also an example of the integration of intelligence with operations, given the partnership between the intelligence community and Joint Special Operations Command. It wasn't a new lesson or blinding realization, but rather a reinforcement of the idea that the sum is greater than the individual parts. Clearly, CIA got a lot of public credit, and rightfully so. But the evolution of that takedown, and what led up to it, could not have happened without the contributions of NGA and NSA, which were crucial. From an intelligence perspective, there's no dramatic lesson there, but we brought to bear all the disciplines—SIGINT, imagery and HUMINT.

Q: What role do you see technology playing in creating intelligence integration?

A: Technology is crucial to integration. Being an intelligence geezer, and having been in the business a long time, I tend to think of things now in a more historical perspective. As I look back to 'my war,' when I went to Vietnam in early 1965, automation was an acetate grease pencil and two corporals. The whole notion of the way we move and share data, and the volumes and rapidity of it, was unthought-of at that time. Even since Desert Storm, when I was chief of Air Force intelligence, we had great frustration with moving large volumes of imagery around. In fact, that was one of the major critiques of Desert Storm. It's what led to the formation of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, which turned into NGA, and now [NGA Director] Tish Long has made it an NGA priority to put GEOINT into the hands of the warfighter with new and better technology.

Finding the right kernel of intelligence in all that information we're moving around is also important. There are information sharing programs already in use that can share information across different systems and alert an analyst who is studying a specific topic, on whichever system they're working, to tell them if an alert hits on a different system. That same program will use metadata to tag their notes with the source document all the way into the final report.

Ultimately, to achieve greater integration and information to sharing, we are very deeply engaged in a communitywide approach to a more unitary architecture across the intelligence community, and it's something we've talked about as a nirvana for years. I think it would do wonders in terms of efficiency, and promoting integration, as we near the inevitable budget cuts, I think this is an area of greatest potential for reduction in the amount of funding we now spend.

Q: What organizational changes in the ODNI have you made in the past year to help achieve greater integration?

A: As I mentioned earlier, the major change has been the melding of the two previously separate directorates here, which reflected the classical organization of analysis and collection as two separate things.

Thematically, integration applies to everything else that we do here. We have responsibilities for overseeing acquisition, personnel, policy and a whole range of things, all of which revolve around integration. That's what I think this office ultimately should be promoting.

Q: You are speaking again this year at the GEOINT Symposium. How does geospatial intelligence fit into your vision of overall integration?

A: It's what I always said about it when I was director of NIMA and NGA. GEOINT is the base foundation over which other forms of intelligence and information can be overlaid. It's the simple premise that everything and everybody has to be some place. GEOINT is the base common denominator—the geographical reference on which you overlay other forms of intelligence. It's the foundation for integration.

Q: What benefits have you found from integrating collection and analysis?

A: I see all kinds of benefits. There are a lot of examples that I can't cite because they are classified. But I will say that I think we will be better able to address an Arab Spring, for example, and better able to anticipate it and respond to it, in terms of satisfying our customers, with an approach like this. You have a quarterback for the whole problem, who has access to and can influence what agencies or functional managers do in support of our needs. There are two tiers here. On the one hand, there is what each agency can do in and of itself—what adjustments does it make. Then there are the adjustments that we need to make across agencies. Intelligence is clearly a team sport. Also, if necessary, what things are we going to quit doing in deference to satisfying higher priority needs? What this structure attempts to do is to set up a template and repeatable processes, so that when each of these things happen, we have a defined structure and rules of the road about how we're going to react, respond and adjust.

Q: What is your office doing to respond to the challenges of cyberspace?

A: One of the 17 NIMs is for cyber. Our function is to provide intelligence in support of the various cyber missions, whether to defense or attack. The NIM for cyber attends to that, applying the organizational principles that I described earlier.

Q: What is your approach for achieving the best results for the seemingly contradictory goals of information sharing and security?

A: There is no magic algorithm or formula that says that we'll automatically thread the needle between those two poles; however, I believe that security and sharing aren't antithetical. We must increase security as we increase sharing to ensure the right information is shared with the right people in the right form. We're always going to have the challenge of finding the sweet spot that hits the right level of sharing and security. And WikiLeaks has certainly focused attention on a situation where security controls were insufficient to address proper sharing requirements. So what we're doing, not only in the IC but in DoD and across the entire U.S. government, is to take remedial actions to correct deficiencies we have found, to ensure we better know what people are doing with information, but at the same time to ensure that those actions don't hamper the necessary sharing that must go on for the

IC, and all of government, to properly carry out its mission. Of course, remedial actions we can take are all helpful, but it is important to note that in the end our system of government operates on personal trust. In WikiLeaks, we had an egregious violation of the personal trust we place in every government employee. It has happened before and we know it will happen again. But that unfortunate fact must not detract from the imperative to share responsibly. Secure and responsible sharing must be the norm.

Q: What budgetary outlook do you see for intelligence programs, and how are you preparing for a potentially more austere fiscal environment?

A: We're deeply involved in the challenge of the deficit and how to reduce it. The intelligence community is not immune, and we are going to tighten our belts and reduce. For the past 10 years, the intelligence community has received additional resources to address increased mission requirements. Now, it's going to be a different situation. This is a historically cyclical thing. I was director of the Defense Intelligence Agency in the early 1990s, the last time we did this when we had to reap the 'peace dividend' after the Cold War. We went into a down-slope of resources for about seven years, which came to a screeching halt after September 11, 2001. Now the cycle is going to repeat itself, and I view this as a litmus test for this office, to preside over these inevitable cuts, which we will take, and to profit from the experience of the early 1990s and do a better job at managing reductions.

Everything we do in intelligence is not of equal merit. Some capabilities and programs are more valuable than others, and in particular, I think it's very important to protect the most valuable resource we have, which is our people. We must continue to hire every year, which we didn't do in many cases during that seven-year period. We must try to sustain a healthy R&D capability for the future, and I think we have to be very objective about the real contribution the various systems and programs make. I have already engaged with the program managers and functional managers, because this has to be a communitywide effort that we'll certainly lead. In the end, we're going to have less capability than we do today. That's a fact, because the magnitude of the cuts is such that we can't avoid terminating some capabilities we have today. But I am reasonably confident that we can come through this without a great deal of harm.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: For me, the message is pretty simple—focusing on integration. The other thing we're consumed with right now is the budget environment, and the part that we in intelligence have to play in that. Overriding all of that, now that we've gotten through the 10th anniversary of September 11, is protecting the homeland, which is the primary concern we have here, and we will have to continue to do even as we reduce. What I've tried to instill here is that the entire staff has a relationship with what I'm calling integration. That's my banner. ★